

Bare CIA cover-up dopes in smuggling

(originally Mooney)

Forced
killing of
charges

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75, Chicago Daily News

The Central Intelligence Agency forced the Justice Department to drop charges against one of its agents who helped smuggle more than 100 pounds of raw opium — with a street value of \$3.5 million — from Thailand to Chicago, an investigation by The Daily News has disclosed.

The CIA flatly told top officials in the Justice Department that they could not prose-

cute its agent, who was arrested and indicted in Chicago.

The CIA said if its agent were tried on the opium smuggling charge, "the situation could prove embarrassing to the CIA," according to documents obtained by The Daily News.

THE CIA did admit that the agent was a native-born Thai with a history of undercover work for the spy agency in Thailand, Burma, and elsewhere in the Golden Triangle of Southeast Asia.

This area is the source of 70 per cent of the world's opium supply from which heroin is derived.

The opium was smuggled into the United States in 25 newsreel film cans bearing the insignia of an American misionary group. It was marked "unexposed film," but was dis-

covered by U.S. customs inspectors at New York.

THE CANS of opium were to be delivered to the Phocis Films Co., 430 W. Grant Pl., and later the opium was to have been processed into heroin.

One clandestine laboratory for processing the raw opium was located on the West Coast in the Berkeley (Calif.) area. Another was operated in the New York area by two Chinese brothers, according to federal documents examined here.

It has been known for some time that the CIA aided the hill people of Southeast Asia in getting their opium crop to market. This crop is the mainstay of their economy.

In return the hill people over the year pledged co-operation with the United States in this country's continuing battle with communism.

THIS IS believed to be the first time any CIA personnel has been directly linked to the smuggling of opium into this country.

The CIA agent involved in the opium smuggling is Puttapon Khamkhruan, 31, a former lieutenant in the Chinese Nationalist army who served with guerrilla forces in Burma before being recruited into the CIA. Khamkhruan was paid \$600 a month by the CIA.

He now lives in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

KHAMKHRUAN was arrested and indicted in Chicago in August, 1973, shortly after he completed an executive study course at Syracuse University in New York.

The course was sponsored by the Agency for International Development (AID), a branch of the State Department that is used frequently by CIA as a cover in Southeast Asia.

According to the indictment:

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